

# Bugis Cultural Taxonomy: An Overview of Hofstede's Cultural Dimension

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**Abstract.** Bugis is a huge society in South Sulawesi. Therefore, Buginese is spread throughout the region of South Sulawesi, and so is the culture. Bugis culture has a strong influence on the people in South Sulawesi, especially on the interaction among the Buginese, and between Buginese or other community. This research aims to explore the Bugis cultural taxonomy in South Sulawesi, particularly in Wajo Regency. In line with the aim, the researchers apply the Geert Hofstede's theory; thus this research is a descriptive qualitative research method by applying Hofstede's cultural taxonomy approach. The source of the data is Bugis people in South Sulawesi, both male, and female who live in the urban and rural areas. Based on the theory, there are five dimensions of cultural pattern, namely: (1) power distance, (2) uncertainty avoidance, (3) individualism versus collectivism, (4) masculinity versus femininity, and (5) long-term versus short-term orientation to time. The result shows that from the five dimensions of Hofstede's cultural taxonomy, four are reflected in Bugis culture, namely power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, and long-term versus short-term of time orientation. Meanwhile, one of them, namely uncertainty avoidance, is not apparent to Bugis culture.

**Keywords:** Bugis, cultural taxonomy, Hofstede's theory

## INTRODUCTION

Culture is not innate. It is learned by interacting with others, either in a small or large group [1]. Culture is present along with humans' thought, which is expressed through symbols with particular meanings. This symbol system forms a cultural basis that represents ideas about beliefs, values, norms, and social practices that will eventually give birth to a "philosophy" for the members of a cultural group. As a philosophy, culture certainly influences the behavior of particular groups of people. The emergence of social practices that shape the character of culture will guide the community about what should be done and what should not be done [2], [3], [4].

Generally, culture influences the response of individuals in the environment where the supporting culture is present. It directly affects how people interact with others. In Bugis society, Bugis culture plays an essential role in the formation of Bugis behavior patterns<sup>5</sup>. Bugis is a major society in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, commonly known as Buginese. An important

aspect of Bugis culture is the concept of custom or tradition, called *panngadereng*. There are five basic principles of this custom, namely *Adek* 'proper', *Bicara* 'jurisprudence', *Rapang* 'models of good behavior in society', *Wari* 'rules of descent and hierarchy', and *Sarak* 'Islamic law' that uniquely come from *lontarak Bugis* [5], [6], [7].

As a dominant culture, Bugis is widely known by people in South Sulawesi. However, knowing people does not necessarily know the culture. Bugis culture has many unique values which are worth analyzing using Hofstede's cultural dimension. Lustig and Koester (2009: 113) argued that cultural taxonomies could be studied through Hofstede's cultural approach. Geert Hofstede has examined cultural differences based on value orientations. Hofstede's approach suggests that people carry mental programs or "software of the mind" that is developed during childhood and is reinforced by their culture. Hofstede identified five dimensions along which the dominant patterns of culture, namely; 1) power distance; 2) uncertainty avoidance; 3) individualism versus collectivism; 4) masculinity versus femininity, and 5) long-term versus short-term of time orientation [1].

The culture and cultural taxonomy understanding above remind us the importance to know the variations of cultures in the world, particularly our own culture. The researchers who were born and grow up in Bugis are thoroughly interested in discussing the Bugis culture deeply through Hofstede's cultural taxonomy. The researchers really appreciate it, as reluctance to learn about our own culture, and those of others means that we are not thoughtful or attentive in seeing different behaviors, which may lead to misunderstanding. Cultural knowledge helps people gain an understanding of other people's experiences and is useful in developing mutual understanding [8], [9] so that it can create harmony in life. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to describe the Bugis cultural pattern based on Hofstede's cultural taxonomy.

## METHOD

This study used qualitative methods with phenomenology design. Qualitative research generally aims to inform about the phenomenon of the research investigations or explorations[10], while phenomenology principally formulates the social science to interpret the human behavior and thought by describing the basic structure [11]. It seeks to analyze culture through its

basic structure. The researchers investigated the social situation and people behaviors in connecting the social phenomenology of Bugis in Wajo Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, with the Hofstede's cultural approach. Data were obtained from observation, interview, recording, and documentation. Male and female Bugis people living in either rural or urban areas were involved in this research. The data gained were analyzed descriptively and served as supporting data taken from related literature.

## RESULT

As mentioned earlier, Bugis is one of the ethnic groups dominated South Sulawesi, Indonesia, although some of them live in other places around the world. To explore the Bugis cultural taxonomy in South Sulawesi, particularly in Wajo Regency through Hofstede's theory, the researcher analyzed the culture based on the five dimensions of the cultural pattern. These dimensions are described as follows.

### Power Distance

Power Distance refers to the degree to which the culture believes that institutional and organizational power should be distributed unequally, and the decision of the power holders should be challenged and accepted [1]. For Bugis culture in Wajo Regency, the issue of inequality came from the first generation. In social interaction, Bugis people had a specific name to address people based on the social level. For instance, *Puang* was used to address people who were powerful or had higher social level, different from ordinary people (*sama*). *Puang* might be regarded as superior to other people because of the family background. Related to nobility, they were known as *arung*, whose ancestors were relatives of the king in the past. The noble status was still maintained by them, particularly those who lived in rural areas, but some people who were living in urban areas also did the same thing. The nobility of Bugis in South Sulawesi was an essential part of Bugis culture to show the power distance of the higher level from the lower ones. Even though the nobility was dominated the power distance of Bugis culture in Wajo Regency, the noble status was supported by good behaviors and economic level. Bugis people with bad behaviors were not regarded as having higher power than others. In line with this, the noble people who had much money were more powerful than others. Also, power distance was influenced by occupation, where people with a high/good position in the government were more influential in their community.

### Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty Avoidance refers to the ability to adapt to changes and to cope with uncertainties, it is the extent to which the culture feels threatened by ambiguous, specific situations, and tries to avoid them by establishing more structure [1]. Like other societies in Indonesia, Bugis also displayed uncertainty avoidance, but they did not

feel threatened. For Bugis people, particularly in Wajo Regency, ambiguous and uncertainty situation was no big deal since they were basically adventurers. Most Bugis people were traders, which were required to be more adaptive to change and ready to cope with uncertainties. For Bugis-Wajo, the identity of Bugis was crucial; thus, they were committed to maintaining it in any situations. Therefore, they tended to show low uncertainty avoidance since it reflected their cultural value as a trader with a high work ethic.

Social status also influenced one's level of uncertainty avoidance in Bugis. People with high social status in the rural area were expected to adapt to the new situation when coming to the urban area. In other words, they were encouraged to display low uncertainty avoidance by willing to accept changes and adapt to urban' life when living in the city.

### Individualism versus Collectivism

Individualism versus collectivism refers to the degree to which a culture relies on and has allegiance to the self or the group [1]. Indeed, people must live and interact with others to survive, and so do the Bugis people. In doing so, they developed a way of interactions where they not only care for themselves, but also others. Individualism refers to do something for her/himself; where the autonomy of the individual is paramount, while collectivism refers to do something for both her/himself and the groups. Thus they juxtapose the benefits to the individual and also to the group. It is not only limited to the Bugis people in Wajo regency, but also applies to all people based on their life principle. Individualism was mostly found in urban areas where people are busy to do their business, while collectivism was mostly found in rural areas where people prefer to do something together. As a result, the life principle in the urban was simpler than in the rural. In the wedding party, for instance, the party in the urban area often showed individualism because many activities were eliminated. For example, the foods were ordered from the catering, the event took place in a rental building, and the people who handle the party are from the commercial event. This condition is very different from the party at the rural where people still show collectivism in preparing foods, delivering the invitation, and organizing other traditional activities. In sum, they generally tended to prioritize togetherness rather than individual life. This value was also apparent in Bugis culture, where the unity of the people was called *panngadereng* 'Bugis custom/tradition' [5], [6], [7].

### Masculinity versus Femininity

Like the previous pattern, masculinity versus femininity is also determined by the life principle. Masculinity culture is often related to ambition, individualism, assertiveness, and the acquisition of wealth; while femininity culture defined as sympathetic, caring for others, and aiming for the quality of life [1]. Generally, both masculinity and femininity were found in Bugis-Wajo, but were not so prominent. The masculinity

pattern was seen in the economic field. The people of Bugis-Wajo were ambitious in conducting their business; even they were individualistic in gaining business profits.

Conversely, the femininity pattern is found in the government and political fields. The governments in Wajo Regency cared for the citizens, especially when they needed them to be supporters in political campaign or election. Besides, Buginese Muslims regularly promoted Islamic teachings to create a better quality of life. They practiced traditional Islamic [5], [6].

### Long-term versus Short-term orientation to time

Time orientation refers to a person's point of reference for life and work. Hofstede views that cultures promote a long-term orientation toward life to admire persistence, thriftiness, and humility, while cultures with a short-time orientation toward changing events have an expectation of quick results following one's actions [1]. One of the examples is the life structure of farmers in cultivation field as members of a culture. To survive in life and prepare for the future, they cultivated something for long time orientation, such as rice. At the same time, they also planted something for short time orientation to fulfill their daily needs, such as vegetables. This cultural pattern fit well with the life of Bugis people in Wajo Regency. Geographically, Wajo is famous for its fertile agricultural and plantation land [4]. Therefore, besides working as a civil servant, they also worked as farmers in their leisure time. Some of them even worked as both traders and farmers. They farmed in the agricultural season, then traded between the seasons.

Hofstede's taxonomy generally coincides with Bugis culture. From the five cultural patterns described, four of five dimensions of Hofstede's cultural taxonomies are reflected in the cultural development of Bugis-Wajo. The four dimensions include distance power, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, and long-term versus short-term time orientation. As for uncertainty avoidance, it seems suitable to Bugis-Wajo cultural development, but not very threatening. Because of their livelihood as adventurer and trader, they are ready to face unexpected situations and conditions. As the saying goes, Bugis people have their umbrella and ready even before the rain.

### CONCLUSION

Hofstede offers five cultural dimensions, namely; 1) power distance concerning the issue of human inequality; 2) uncertainty avoidance concerning how people adapt to changes and cope with uncertainties; 3) individualism-collectivism, related to the phenomenon that people must

live and interact with others to survive; 4) masculinity-femininity concerning the fact that people must find a solution, need assertiveness and the acquisition of wealth or caring for others and pursue a better the quality of life, and 5) long-term and short-term time orientations. In case of cultural development of Bugis-Wajo, Hofstede's taxonomy generally coincides with Bugis culture. The result shows that among the five dimensions, four are reflected in Bugis culture, namely distance power, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, and long-term versus short-term time orientation. Another dimension called uncertainty avoidance can also be found in Bugis-Wajo cultural development, but tend to be low, thus not treated as threatening. Bugis tradition and culture are well preserved, as the people hold on to the principle of Bugis identity in any situations in their life.

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